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TAROT FUNDAMENTALS

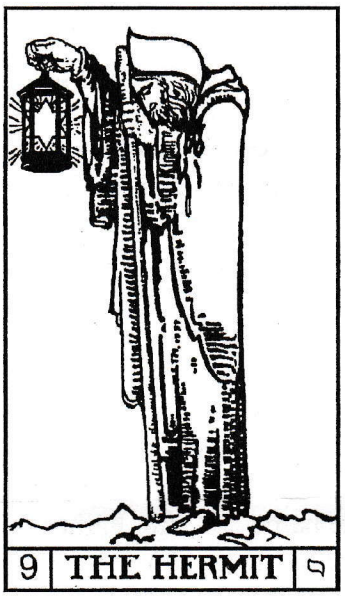
Lesson No 21

BUILDERS OF THE ADYTUM

TAROT FUNDAMENTALS

Lesson Twenty-one

RESPONSE



The number 9 is said to be the symbol of adeptship and prophecy. It is easy to see that the Hermit represents adeptship for he stands on a mountain peak. His staff is in his left hand to show he does not need it for climbing. It is evident that he has reached the top, that he stands at the summit of the path of occult attainment.

That he represents prophecy is not so obvious, though his white beard and venerable aspect suggest traditional conceptions of how a prophet looks. Yet this picture really does express the idea of prophecy.

A prophet, remember, is not merely one who makes predictions. Any fortune-teller, or any political campaign manager, might be called a prophet, were that all. A genuine prophet is one who **knows** his vision of the future is true because it is founded on accurate understanding of principles.

By applying his knowledge of principles to the study of nations and races, a true prophet can predict their future. Sometimes the writings of great prophets offer hope. "Change your ways, and the evil I see may be averted. Come back to the Way of Liberation and you shall be free."

At other times their prophetic knowledge shows that a person or a nation has gone too far in the wrong direction to avoid the consequences of evil behavior. Then the voice of prophecy becomes a voice of doom.

The Hermit stands looking down over the path he has ascended. Others are climbing the same way and he watches their upward progress with benevolent interest. He is familiar with every step. He knows all the by-paths. He has himself surmounted every danger. He feels for every climber and holds out his lantern as a beacon.

We need to keep remembering this. For the Hermit is a symbol of the I AM which is at one and the same time **above** and **within** us all. By means of Key 9, Tarot tells us we are in continual contact with Reality which knows all we have ever thought, all we have ever done, and knows also every step of the path ahead of us.

This does not mean fate, as generally understood. It does mean a kind of predestination because we are all destined sometime to reach the height whereon the Hermit stands. Yet no **outside** force is driving us remorselessly onward. An **indwelling** Presence, timeless because eternal, knows every experience we must pass through in terms of time and space to fulfil this destiny which is ours.

Sympathetically and lovingly, this Presence guides us. It sends the light of its omniscience into our personal consciousness to give us courage to continue the journey.

The Hermit is "He who stands alone". The title shows this, being derived from a root which means "solitary". Thus the name of this Key connects with the Hebrew noun יחידה Yekhidah, meaning "the single, the indivisible". This term is used in Hebrew Wisdom to designate the **One Identity**, just as the word **Atman**, in Sanskrit, stands for the same Reality.

Yekhidah is said to be seated in the first and highest sphere of Being, named Kether, the Crown, and corresponding to the number 1 on the Tree of Life. The Crown is the Primal Will to which the upper point of the letter Yod is assigned.

The Hermit, therefore, is a representation of the Ancient of Days, or the **One Identity**, as the Will Power in the universe. To this Power all forms of its self-expression respond. It has no support other than itself. Thus one book of Hebrew Wisdom says the letter Yod is "above all (symbolizing the Father) and with Him is none other associated." The name אב, Ab, Father, is also the special designation of the aspect of Reality which is the seat of the life-force in human personality, and in all creation.

"He who stands alone" also symbolizes adeptship. An adept, consciously identifying himself with all that is, sets himself apart by this very attitude from all but others like himself. He cannot share his knowledge with those who do not comprehend it. By reason of his superior knowledge, he must needs be a hermit.

Yet his is by no means the proud separativeness of an egotist. There was no tinge of egotism in the remark which legend attributes to Einstein—that not twelve men in all the world could understand his theory of relativity. Einstein denied that he ever made this remark, but even if he had, it would have been free from egotism. Superiority and loneliness go together. Yet the loneliness of a sage is not like the loneliness of the unenlightened. A sage has what the ignorant do not enjoy—continual companionship with the **One Self**, unbroken awareness of union with the One Reality which is the sage's own **Identity.**

The law attributed to Key 9 is Response. This law may be stated thus: **Every activity of human personality is really a response to the initiative of the Originating Principle of the Universe.** The essential thought here is that no personal activity whatever has its beginning, source, or origin within the limits of the personality. All **personal** action is derived, reflective, responsive.

To every one of us it seems that our states of mind and our actions express purely personal motives. This semblance of personal initiative affects the most illumined of wise men, except in rare instances of ecstatic identification with the Absolute, just as it does anyone else. A wise man, however, **knows** better. He thinks differently from those who try to live on the assumption that personal thought, feeling and action are self-caused. His words, whenever they are recorded, are sure to include some reference to the fact that he really does nothing of himself.

Personality is the mask of the true Identity. This Identity is superior to, and is not limited by, the conditions of personality. It is from this inner and superior Identity that the original impulse flows, and all the activities of personality, the instrument or vehicle, are but effects of this outward and downward movement of the energy, or working power, of the true Identity, or I AM.

Ageless Wisdom declares there is but **One Identity in the Universe. This One Identity is the single source of all forms of existence, here, or anywhere.** Its presence is the substance of everything. The mental quality of the One Identity is what is manifested in any particular expression of consciousness. The energy of the One Identity is what is released through any particular form of activity.

Your personality is but one of its innumerable forms of expression. Your real nature is none other than that **One.** Hence, whatever laws and forces condition the activity of your personality must be laws and forces proceeding from your own true Identity.

The Hebrew letter Yod (י) resembles a tongue of flame. It is a component part of every letter of the ancient Chaldean alphabet, now known as "square Hebrew" to distinguish it from the earlier script used by the Children of Israel before the Captivity.

Because Yod is the foundation of the letters and looks like a flame, the Chaldean or square Hebrew alphabet is often named "The Flame Alphabet". The Hebrew alphabet itself is a symbol of everything that ever was or ever will be. Thus the letter Yod, as a component part of every other letter, symbolizes the flame of spiritual energy which is present in all forms of the Life-power's self-expression.

Yod is a Hebrew noun meaning "the hand of man". Thus it is directly connected with the ancient doctrine: The primary and fundamental Reality of the universe is identical with the power expressed by the handiwork of human beings.

It is said by Qabalists that the upper point of Yod represents the Primal Will, while the rest of the letter corresponds to the aspect of the Life-power named Wisdom. This means that **all mental activity is derived directly from the essential Will of the One Identity**, and this mental activity, or volition, takes form as the Wisdom which is the basis for the entire cosmic order. Furthermore, the mental activity of the Primal Will, symbolized by the upper point of

Yod, expands into the life-force of all beings, and this life-force is fiery, as the shape of the letter suggests.

The hand of man is also the seat of highly organized centers of the sense of touch. This sense is therefore assigned to Yod.

The hand is also a striking symbol of that whereby the human mind makes contact with the superconsciousness above it. Thus in Key 1, representing Mercury and the conscious mind, it is the right hand of the Magician which lifts the wand whereby his contact with the higher level is established. Furthermore, the uplifted wand symbolizes the sublimation of the serpent power or what psychologists term libido.

The most intense forms of ecstatic union with the Absolute are often described in erotic imagery. Why? Because the most intense feeling of pleasure in the field of physical experience is known through the sense of touch. The higher forms of interior union with the One Identity are experiences of blissful **contact** which those who attempt to describe such feelings often represent by definitely erotic imagery.

Key 9 represents attainment through union. This means that the end of the Path is reached when the personality meets the inner Self in perfect contact. A graphic symbol of this is the slow, steady growth, throughout the ages, of stalagmites and stalactites in a cave. In that growth, the stalactite which extends itself downward from the roof of the cave is the active agent. The upward growth of the stalagmite from the floor of the cave is a response to the steady downpour of drops of a limestone solution from the stalactite. The stalactite may be taken as a symbol for the One Identity, ever moving itself nearer to union with the ascending personality symbolized by the stalagmite. When at last they reach the stage of growth where they make contact, their united form is that of a pillar, approximately the shape of the letter "I" which is the English, Latin and Greek equivalent for Yod.

In writing the figure 9 in ordinary script, the first part of the character is a reproduction of the zero sign, and, from the point where the circle is closed, a straight line, or figure 1, descends. In writing the upper part of the figure, one's hand describes a complete circuit suggesting the completion of a course of action. Then the straight line is drawn, a figure 1, symbol of beginning and initiative.

The end of one cycle is always the beginning of another. Attainment is never complete. After the union of the personality with the One Identity, there are greater heights to scale, as we see in the Tarot picture of the Fool.

Attributed to the letter Yod, and thus to Key 9, is the zodiacal sign Virgo. It is ruled by Mercury, that is, by the power symbolized in Tarot as the Magician; and astrologers say Mercury is exalted also in Virgo. Thus in Key 9 we have a symbol of the highest expression of what is pictured by Key 1.

Mercury represents the Life-power working at the self-conscious level where the brain is its most important instrument. The physiological field of Mercury's operation in the brain is the frontal lobe of that organ. Our greatest brain-physiologist, Dr. Frederick Tilney,[1] calls the frontal lobe "Master of Destiny". In it are the controls which determine all bodily responses. One of the most important areas controlled by the frontal lobe of the brain, is the part of the body astrology puts under the dominion of Virgo.

This area is the abdominal region, and especially the upper part of the small intestine where food is assimilated and sent to the various organs which transmute it into bone, tissue and the various secretions indispensable to physical existence. At one state of intestinal digestion, food is transformed into an oily, milky substance named **chyle**, from which the lacteals absorb nourishment for the blood stream.

When, under proper self-conscious direction, the finer forces always present in chyle are liberated into the blood stream, these forces energize brain centers which function in the experience termed illumination.

Pursue this thought as far as you can beyond this brief explanation. Consider that, in all legends of World Saviors, the Great One is said to be born of a virgin. Remember also that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, which means "The House of Bread", and that when the shepherds came to adore him, they found the Babe lying in a **manger**. The liberating power is born, or released, in the dark cave of the House of Bread.

Among the highest expressions of human consciousness are those which control the activities of the intestinal tract. This may seem strange, but it is perfectly true. We control the activities of the assimilative portion of the intestinal tract by choosing carefully what we eat, physically, mentally and emotionally, and by utilizing the law of suggestion to effect the release of the subtle forces from chyle.

This last seldom occurs unless one knows of the possibility, understands to some degree how such release of subtle force will bring about illumination, and definitely takes himself in hand for the sake of accomplishing the Great Work.

It has been said that God chooses the weak things of the world to confound the wise, and certainly the fact that illumination depends on the release into the blood stream of a subtle force which is generated in the intestinal tract is one not likely to appeal to sentimental aesthetes. Yet there it is, a stubborn fact, and, for those who have eyes to see, a thing of real beauty.

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[1] Dr. Tilney was a prominent neurologist during the early part of the 20th Century. He was Chair of the Department of Neurology at Columbia University in New York from 1920-1935, during the time this lesson series was originally written.

During the coming week, ponder the ideas of this lesson. Try to see in how many ways you can penetrate the veil of appearances, and see with the mind's eye that your personal activities are really responses to the impact of the Universal Will. See, if you can, how, little by little, in the dark cave of the House of Bread, the Life-power is weaving the vesture of a finer vehicle through which you will eventually become consciously aware of your union with the **One Identity.**

COLORING INSTRUCTIONS

KEY 9. THE HERMIT

Yellow:	Lantern rays, between black lines.
Blue:	Hermits cap.
Brown:	Staff, shoe.
Gray:	Robe (not right sleeve of undergarment), foreground (not peaks).
White:	Hair, beard, right sleeve, mountain peaks.
Indigo or Black:	Background. Indigo is a deep blue-violet and black. The scene is a night sky. Better use black, unless you are skilled in handling watercolors.
Gold:	Star.